

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 EC BRU 09425 271905Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

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INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 2530

AMEMBASSY LISBON

CONFIDENTIAL EC BRUSSELS 9425

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EEC, ECON, PO

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL'S INTEREST IN EARLY APPLICATION FOR EC

MEMBERSHIP

REF: (A) EC BRUSSELS 9235; (B) EC BRUSSELS 8848

1. AS REPORTED REF A, PORTUGUESE FOREIGN MINISTER FERREIRA  
REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON THE LIKELY TIMING OF PORTUGAL'S  
APPLICATION FOR EC MEMBERSHIP IN HIS CAREFULLY NUANCED REMARKS  
AT A BRUSSELS PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 20. HOWEVER, THERE  
SEEMS TO BE GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG EC COUNCIL, COMMISSION  
AND PERMREP SOURCES WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN THAT WHILE THE  
PORTUGUESE ARE BEING ADVISED TO GO SLOW IN PUTTING FORWARD  
AN APPLICATION FOR EC ACCESSION, PORTUGUESE PRIME MINISTER  
SOARES IS EAGER TO PRESS AHEAD. SOARES IS THOUGHT TO FEEL THAT  
AN EARLY FAVORABLE DECISION ON THE GOP'S APPLICATION WOULD HAVE  
A BENEFICIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND  
HELP STABILIZE POLITICAL SITUATION IN PORTUGAL. OUR SOURCES  
UNDERSTAND THAT SOARES WILL INTENSIFY HIS CONSULTATIONS  
IN EC CAPITALS IN OCTOBER-NOVEMBER.

2. IN GENERAL OUR SOURCES THINK IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DETER  
A PORTUGUESE APPLICATION BEYOND EARLY 1977. THEY BELIEVE THAT  
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PAGE 02 EC BRU 09425 271905Z

GIVEN THE GREEK PRECEDENT AND THE GENERAL SENTIMENT IN EC

MEMBER GOVERNMENTS FAVORING REASONABLE WESTERN EUROPEAN EFFORTS  
TO BUTTRESS PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR  
THE EC TO REFUSE PORTUGAL'S APPLICATION OUTRIGHT. HOWEVER,  
BECAUSE OF THE MANY IMPLICATIONS SUCH AN APPLICATION WILL HAVE  
FOR FURTHER ENLARGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY (E.G., SPAIN AND POS-  
SIBLY EVEN TURKEY) AND BECAUSE OF PORTUGAL'S PRESENT MODEST  
STAGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT  
ITS POLITICAL FUTURE, THESE SOURCES HOPE THAT THE PORTUGUESE  
CAN BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT FOR THE NEAR TERM SOME KIND OF "HALF-  
WAY" STAGE OF ASSOCIATION WITH THE COMMUNITY WHOSE PARAMETERS  
REMAIN AS YET UNCLEAR. SEVERAL PERMREP AND COMMISSION SOURCES  
SUGGEST THAT THE EC COULD RESPOND TO THE PORTUGUESE APPLICATION  
BY AGREEING TO ULTIMATE MEMBERSHIP "IN PRINCIPLE" AND THEN SPIN-  
NING OUT THE ACCESSION TALKS, WHILE PROVIDING PORTUGAL SUB-  
STANTIAL INTERIM PALLIATIVES IN THE FORM OF TRADE CONCESSIONS,  
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, AND POSSIBLY EVEN PARTICIPATION IN POLI-  
TICAL CONSULTATIONS. HOWEVER, LIKE COMMISSION VICE PRESIDENT  
SOAMES IN HIS SEPTEMBER 10 CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR  
(REF B), COMMISSION AND PERM DEL OFFICIALS RECALL THAT FOR POLI-  
TICAL REASONS THE EC COUNCIL CAPITULATED RATHER QUICKLY  
TO GREEK DEMANDS FOR THE RAPID OPENING OF ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS,  
WITHOUT ADEQUATELY WEIGHING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT ACCESSION  
FOR ENLARGEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY, AND SUGGEST THAT IT IS  
ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THE MEMBER STATES WILL DO THE SAME IN  
PORTUGAL'S CASE. THEY NOT THAT DESPITE THE PRESENT ECONOMIC  
AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTIES IN PORTUGAL, THE BROADER POLITICAL  
ARGUMENTS FOR BINDING PORTUGAL MORE FIRMLY TO THE WESTERN  
EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES THROUGH ACCESSION ARE PROBABLY AS COM-  
PELLING AS IN THE CASE OF GREECE.HINTON

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